

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

AMERICORPS

PUBLIC BOARD MEETING

Washington, D.C.

Wednesday, October 19, 2022

PARTICIPANTS

Board Members and AmeriCorps staff:

CATHY MCLAUGHLIN, Chair
Executive Director
Biden Institute at the University of Delaware

LESLIE BLUHM

FAGAN HARRIS
Chief Executive Officer
Baltimore Corps

SHIRLEY SAGAWA

ALVIN WARREN
Vice President, Career Pathways and Advocacy
LANL Foundation

MICHAEL SMITH
Chief Executive Officer
AmeriCorps

Invited Speakers:

MAYA CARTER, AmeriCorps member
Breakthrough Central Texas

JESS GOMEZ, AmeriCorps member
Jumpstart

JUDITH HICKS, Foster Grandparent
Northern Arizona University Foster Grandparent Program

CECE NAÑEZ, AmeriCorps member
City Year

VALERIE TU, AmeriCorps member
FoodCorps AmeriCorps

Commenters:

ZAHRA ALI, student, Augsburg University (Minnesota)
Youth representative, National Youth Leadership Council's board

SAAGAR GUPTA, Coordinator, Service-Learning Programs at American U.

NORIANA JAKOPIN, service learning advocate

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A G E N D A

Opening Remarks by the Chair

CEO Report

OGA Committee Report

Approval of FY 2023 Annual Grantmaking Plan

Simple as ABC: AmeriCorps Puts Students on the

Path to Success

Public Comments

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(4:00 p.m.)

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Good afternoon. The meeting of the AmeriCorps Board of Directors will now come to order. I want to thank everyone and thank all of you for joining us today for this meeting. My name is Cathy McLaughlin, and I'm honored to serve as the Board chair.

I would like to welcome our new Board members who have joined us since our last meeting, Leslie and Shirly, for our meeting today. They were confirmed after our last meeting, so this is exciting to have them join us. AmeriCorps is unusual among federal agencies and having a Board of directors appointed by the president and confirmed by the Senate. I'm excited to serve with colleagues who bring such a vast experience and expertise from many backgrounds.

First, before we begin, I'd like to thank the AmeriCorps staff at headquarters and around the country for your commitment, hard work and professionalism and carrying out AmeriCorps' mission. We couldn't do what we do without all of you. I'd also like to express my deep appreciation the 250,000 dedicated members, volunteers and staff that serve AmeriCorps and AmeriCorps Seniors program across the country. Every day you do the vital work to improve lives, expand opportunity, strengthen communities, and unite our nation. We are grateful for your service and proud to be your partners.

Let me go over today's agenda. First, our CEO, Michael Smith, will provide his report to the Board. Then Fagan will report on the Oversight Governance and Audit Committee. The Board would then consider a resolution on AmeriCorps 2023 Annual Grantmaking plan. We will then have a virtual tour to learn about AmeriCorps' impact and education. We will conclude by opening up the meeting for public comments.

If you'd like to make a comment, please indicate your interest by using your "Raise your Hand" feature on Zoom. If you are joining by a conference call instead of Zoom, you will not be able to comment. But there's still time for you to join Zoom.

I'd like to share a brief recap of the Board's activities today and what we'll be doing tomorrow. Earlier today, the Board met with senior staff about several topics, including the Agency's work to strengthen financial management budget matters, the Agency's legislative and regulatory priorities, and the FY 23 grantmaking plan. We were pleased to see the progress made on key agent priority of raising member living allowance, living allowances and stipends to recruitment and retention and to advance equity, which is a major focus of our Board meeting in May.

Tomorrow, the Board will be meeting at the White House with senior officials to discuss the President's unity agenda and the ways we can work

together with the White House and other agencies to strengthen the role of national service in meeting critical challenges, expanding opportunity and fostering national unity. We will then meet with the AmeriCorps inspector general. As a board of directors, ensuring federal resources are properly and effectively spent is a key priority, and we recognize the important role of the Inspector General in helping us strengthen fiscal management and accountability. Finally, we will meet with the union president and close out the day with discussions on AmeriCorps member recruitment, Schools of National Service and Board engagement opportunities. I'm excited and impressed from our conversations today and the reports we've been getting the past few months about the excellent work that's being done across the country and the Agency's progress on many fronts.

Now, it's my great pleasure to introduce AmeriCorps CEO Michael Smith. Michael has done an incredible job since taking the helm of the Agency just in January -- it might seem longer than that, Michael -- bringing his decades of experience in public and non-profit sectors to help AmeriCorps increase its impact and effectiveness. Michael, I'll turn this over to you now.

MR. SMITH: Thank you, Cathy, so much. And thank you to all of you, our extended AmeriFamily, for joining us today. Let me start by saying how grateful we are to have such outstanding Board members who bring extraordinary knowledge and experience in matters related to our mission. We are excited to work with all of you to increase the impact of service and volunteering and tackling the nation's biggest challenges. I'd like to thank our amazing AmeriCorps team and our thousands of partners across the country who support this extraordinary system of national service that is so important to the health and the well-being of our nation. It's a privilege to lead this Agency, not only because of the transforming work we do every day, but also because of the passion and commitment of all of those in our AmeriCorps family. Over the past few months, I've had the opportunity to meet hundreds of AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps senior Corps volunteers every day, AmeriCorps senior volunteers every day, and every project that I visit, every member or volunteer that I meet, I am more confident about the power and the potential of national service.

I think about my new friend, the 81-year-old foster grandparent that I met in Maine, Grammy Fran. There's a little video on our LinkedIn page if you want to learn more about Grammy Fran. Grammy Fran didn't let the pandemic stop her from serving her kids. After her school shut down during the COVID pandemic, she secured free laptops for her fellow volunteers, learned how to use laptops and other. . .like, they had training for each other. And within weeks they were back with their kids, reading stories and giving support and even starting a remote crafts program. Grammy Fran told me that she put together crafts kits and would drop them off to the teacher so they could distribute in the neighborhood. She has been a foster grandparent for 21 years, and she says her service gives her purpose, meaning and a life of abundance. She told me, and I quote, "I

might not have much to leave when I die, but I can leave a legacy every day by what I do." I just. . .can you feel it? We all need to go to Maine and see Grammy Fran.

I think about a young man I met in Baltimore at a service project with second gentleman Doug Imhoff. (And the second gentleman has become such a great champion of our work.) The young man was raised by a single mom and his family had been touched by homelessness. He talked about living on porches, dropping out of school, and losing his friends to violence and drugs. He told me that he found his purpose, his calling, and even his career path in AmeriCorps through our partner at Civic Works in Baltimore. I think about Improve your Tomorrow, a program that I visited in California, that is breaking generational cycles of poverty by engaging AmeriCorps members as mentors for young men of color, helping them graduate high school and go to college. Their impact is extraordinary. Black and Latino students receiving mentoring through Improve Your Tomorrow have a high school graduation rate of 99.5 percent compared to a statewide rate of 81 percent.

I heard story after story about young men who overcame incredible odds thanks to the mentoring they received and are now giving back to other young men as mentors themselves. And I think what you hear there is that transformative power of not only making a difference in the communities we're serving, but how our AmeriCorps members are being changed themselves.

You know, if we talk about some other recent accomplishments, I can't help but to think about the United We Stand summit at the White House last month, which really lifted up an important truth that we all know from doing this work. Service is a uniting force. When people from different backgrounds come together to serve, they focus on what they share in common, not what divides them. And of particular importance to all of us, our boss, President Biden, used the summit to call for a new era of national service to foster stronger communities, to bridge divides and our society. To carry that call forward, President Biden asked AmeriCorps to take a leadership role in advancing the United We serve Campaign to encourage Americans to serve with an emphasis on bridge building and social cohesion. And over the coming weeks, we will be following up on the summit, including exploring opportunities for national service partnerships with other federal agencies, developing training for members, and skills like civic bridge building, working with the Office of Personnel Management and our friends at Peace Corps to enhance pathways from service into federal service -- which we are so excited about -- the opportunities there and working with philanthropic partners to support service and civic engagements that foster unity and social cohesion.

The summit was one of many highlights since the Board met in May. AmeriCorps and our partners have been hard at work meeting critical needs in communities across the nation, and we are making progress on many

fronts. And I'd like to share if it's okay, Madame Chair, a few highlights. Right now, AmeriCorps is playing a key role in responding to natural disasters in Florida, Puerto Rico, and Missouri, just to name a few places. We have deployed more than 240 AmeriCorps members to support communities hit hard by natural disasters. In Florida, we have 100 AmeriCorps Disaster Response Team members that are responding to Hurricane Ian. In Puerto Rico, we have 82 FEMA Corps and SBP AmeriCorps members that are responding to Hurricane Fiona. And in Missouri, we have deployed 55 members to support flood relief. And throughout all of those projects, they are working on challenges such as survivor assistance, the hard work of mucking and gutting, tree removal, wellness checks, supporting our partners at FEMA with logistics and so much more. But beyond that work that's happening right now, these efforts represent just the first phase of our involvement. We stay on the scene long after the TV cameras are gone. In fact, our data show that members that are serving right now will likely. . . those members and those teams will likely be in the community for 3 to 5 years after major disasters.

Just yesterday, we released a study that shows that national service disaster response efforts return nearly \$12 for every one federal dollar investment and reduce construction costs, increase tax revenue, reduce spending and employment and education outcomes for AmeriCorps members and their service. And our disaster service work meets another critical need, which is building the future Emergency management workforce. FEMA, our partners on FEMA Corps, they've hired 23 percent of the 5600 FEMA Corps graduates over our last ten years, and 70 percent of this most recent graduating class was issued job offers. So it's making a tangible difference right now.

AmeriCorps members and volunteers continue to address the everyday disasters of illiteracy, hunger, homelessness, poverty that afflicts way too many Americans. We continue to implement our groundbreaking public health AmeriCorps program, which is our \$400 million partnership with the Centers for Disease Control, and that is working to not only meet state and local public health challenges, but also working to develop the workforce pathways for public health centers. And last week, I had the pleasure of joining our Board member, Fagan, at the swearing in of the Baltimore Public Health AmeriCorps members. And we are well on our way. I think we now have nearly a thousand public health AmeriCorps members that are getting sworn in and are ready to serve all across the country.

AmeriCorps projects continue to provide teaching, tutoring, mentoring and other educational support to students across the country. I think many of you probably know that our largest footprint for AmeriCorps is actually in the schools. We have nearly 70,000 AmeriCorps members that are in the K-12 setting in about 12,000 schools across the country. And I think what we've learned coming out of the pandemic is, these programs will be more important than ever to address learning loss and provide supplemental instruction and support social and emotional development.

And that is exactly why we want it to go even a step further by partnering with the White House, the Department of Education, and our outside partners to launch the National Partnership for Student Success, which we did last June. This partnership is a three-year effort to recruit, train, support and engage an additional 250,000 caring adults to serve as tutors, mentors, student success coaches, wraparound service coordinators, and post-secondary transition coaches to help students succeed. Because what we've heard from our educators, yes, they need to be paid more. Yes, we need to invest more in the infrastructure. But they also said we're being asked to do so much as just one individual. So please come in and help us. And we have seen how AmeriCorps is already helping, how volunteers are already helping. And through the National Partnership for Student Success, we're going to do even more.

Moving from education to climate: We are expanding our program to address the threat of climate change and preparing young people for future green jobs. We have more than 15,000 AmeriCorps members and volunteers that are currently serving in these projects each year, and there is great opportunity to expand this work. For example, this summer, our AmeriCorps NCCC program launched a successful Summer of Service pilot focused on climate and conservation. And then we have our state service commissions in California, Colorado, Maine and Michigan and some other states that have recently developed an innovative Climate Corps program, which the Washington Post actually highlighted just last week.

Beyond that, we have raised the minimum AmeriCorps living allowance in both AmeriCorps State National and VISTA to \$17,600 for full time service and are increasing the AmeriCorps living allowance -- as Cathy mentioned earlier -- and our AmeriCorps Seniors stipend. That amount is not a top priority of just this Agency and the Board, but last month, President Biden himself called on Congress to raise the living allowance. Not only did he ask Congress to raise the living allowance, but he said let's get it done. Let's raise it to \$15 an hour and let's do it by Fiscal Year 2025. So we've got a goal in mind, and we're committed to continuing on this path to remove barriers to service, advancing our equity goals, and ensuring national service is a viable option for all people, no matter where they come from or who they are.

And that commitment, I want everyone to know, includes working to increase the stipend that our Foster Grandparents and our Senior Companion volunteers receive, to ensure our low-income elders have the resources they need to serve. I was actually asking Grammy Fran, I said, "Grammy Fran, how are you buying those crafts?" She said, "I'm using my stipend." I said "Grammy Fran, you're supposed to use that for gas and to buy lunch when you're on your . . ." She said something like, "I work to the amount of cloth that I'm given." But we're going to have your backs, our Foster Grandparents and our Senior Companions, and make sure that you have the resources that you need to serve.

And as we continue to work with Congress to increase compensation levels, we are also encouraging grantees and philanthropic organizations to take action now -- don't wait for us. It takes a little while to move the ship that is the federal government. But you can provide all sorts of wraparound supports for our members, and increased living allowances, now. And we have been so, so encouraged by some of our partners in the ground, like Power Corps, that's increased their living allowance, the California Climate Corps. We're also even seeing this interesting coalition that's coming together from philanthropy foundations like the Shultz Philanthropies and Ballmer Philanthropies that are providing resources to our grantees to help raise living allowances and [make possible] other wraparound benefits.

I also want everyone to know that we are investing in recruitment and retention. We have stood up our first centralized recruitment office in 20 years. We haven't had a centralized recruitment unit in 20 years, and we're investing more dollars on marketing and working closely with our partners in the field so that everyone who wants to serve hears about this incredible opportunity to serve.

We are also making steady progress on our top priority of improving financial management and addressing findings from our financial statements audit. And I am so grateful for the leadership of this Board in making sure that we are keeping our eye on fixing the infrastructure. It's not always the fun part of the work, but we can't do anything that we want to get done publicly, or working with our members, if we don't have our financial house in order -- and we are going to get that done.

So -- this is just a partial list of accomplishments over the past few months. It does not include our ongoing work to award and monitor grants to run so many other programs, to conduct research, administer education awards, and support our members and volunteers that are serving at more than 40,000 locations across the country. It's just a highlight.

So looking ahead, we have a lot that is on our plate in the coming months, including awarding our largest-ever set of Volunteer Generation Fund grants in support of the National Partnership for Student Success. We will be releasing our Volunteering and Civic Life in America survey data. We will be reviewing our AmeriCorps State and National planning grants. We will be mobilizing for the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of National Service, even though it's been a little warm. Martin Luther King Jr. Day of service is right around the corner, and we are gearing up for that. And we are going to continue to focus on recruiting and retaining a strong, diverse Corps, working to raise living allowances and stipends to make service more accessible, and making the operational improvements necessary to support the work of our grantees, members, and the volunteer field. So with that, I will turn it back over to you, Madam Chair.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Michael, Thank you. That is an amazing report and the work that's being done the country is so -- everything that everyone's doing here, your staff and the volunteers -- it's really made a huge difference in the world. So thank you for your leadership. Do any of the Board members have any comments or want to respond to anything from the report? We all good? Okay, then let me -- we'll turn this over. We need to hear report from our Oversight, Governance and Audit Committee. So Fagan, let me turn this over to you.

MR. HARRIS: Thank you so much, Cathy, and I'll join you in just welcoming Leslie and Shirley -- two leaders who I've admired for a long time -- to the Board. So excited you all are here.

Thank you for the opportunity to update the Board on the Oversight, Governance and Audit Committee. This committee is reflective of the Board's commitment to AmeriCorps' progress on improving the effective stewardship of funds. We will be champions for this important work and support the Agency as thought partners in keeping us all accountable. It was clear to the Board that the Agency has serious work ahead in this area. Our engagement through this committee reinforces the seriousness of the work and provides the additional focus needed to be successful.

The Oversight, Governance and Audit Committee met for the first time in late August of this year as this was our first meeting. We focused on introductions, sharing of expectations, and setting near-term goals for the committee. The committee will continue to meet every other month and focus on clarifying the purpose and establishing operating procedures as purpose and process become clearer. The committee will engage in reviewing more audit findings, corrective action plans, stewardship of funds and internal controls of the Agency. The committee will continue to provide updates to the Board on both the progress of formalizing the committee and ultimately the performance of the Agency.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you Fagan. The Board really does appreciate how the CEO and the senior leadership team of the Agency have made improving the financial management and addressing audit findings a top priority. And we commend the Agency for the progress it has made to develop and implement corrective action plans to address the audit findings and make other key operational improvements. The Board fully supports these plans and action steps and encourages the Agency to continue to work with the Inspector General and to prioritize resources and attention on addressing findings and other improvements and operations in core business practices, which will better serve our grantees and partners and meeting the needs across the country.

Our next matter of business is to consider the Agency's FY 23 grantmaking plan. One of the Board's primary responsibilities under the statute and bylaws is setting overall policy for the Agency, including reviewing and approving the strategic plan and annual updates of the plan. The annual

grantmaking plan is the formal vehicle through which the Board of Directors authorizes the Agency to make competitive grants and enroll or authorize grantees to enroll members. This grantmaking plan is for the grantmaking, using FY 23 annual appropriations. Given the Agency does not have its final FY 23 appropriation for Congress and is operating under a continuing resolution, the plan assumes level annual appropriations from FY 22. The grantmaking plan will be revisited if AmeriCorps receives a higher or lower appropriation for FY 23. The staff has prepared a comprehensive and well-designed plan, which we discussed at our meeting this morning. I would recommend the Board approve the plan. Would any other Board member like to speak on the grantmaking plan before we move ahead? No one?

I would like to entertain a motion to approve the FY 23 grantmaking plan. Is there a motion to move? All in favor, say yes.

MS. SAGAWA: Yes.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: All opposed?

The resolution is approved and the grantmaking plan will be posted on AmeriCorps' website. Now, our next agenda item is one I'm really looking forward to. At our last Board meeting, we had a virtual tour across the country to learn about the impact of American Rescue Plan funding. It was one of my favorite parts of the last meeting. For this meeting, our virtual tour will focus on AmeriCorps' extensive work and investment and education. I'd like to turn this over to Alvin, who will be our virtual tour guide.

MR. WARREN: Thank you, Cathy. Good afternoon, everybody. I also want to join my colleagues in welcoming Shirley and Leslie to our Board. We're excited to have you, as well as our other Board members who couldn't join us for this meeting today.

As Cathy mentioned in our last Board meeting, one of the best parts of the meeting was actually getting to do this virtual tour. So we're super excited to get to hear from grantees and partners from around the country. So as Cathy mentioned, our focus today is going to be on education. And throughout the history of our Agency, education has been one of AmeriCorps' key focus areas. AmeriCorps awards hundreds of millions of dollars in funding to support education focused projects each year.

AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers support students across the entire education spectrum, from pre-K to college, helping them succeed in school and prepare them for higher education careers in life. They provide a range of services, including early learning, STEM programs, classroom instruction, mentoring, afterschool and summer school support, tutoring, improving attendance, family engagement, social and emotional learning and college access and retention. Altogether, our members and

volunteers provide educational programming to more than 1 million youth. That's pretty amazing.

As someone who works for an education focused foundation and who's been in engaged in education most of my life, I know how valuable these supports can be in making a difference in student's lives. I also know how extremely challenging these past two years have been for students, educators and schools due to the pandemic. Too many students experienced interruptions in learning or negative impacts on their social and emotional well-being with a disproportionate impact on lower income and students of color. I appreciate how AmeriCorps' program partners, members, and volunteers acted quickly and creatively to meet the educational needs of students during the pandemic. Looking ahead, our programs will be more important than ever to address learning, loss, teacher shortages, lost instruction time and mental health challenges.

To help understand the impact of AmeriCorps in education, the team has put together a virtual cross-country tour, so we can hear directly from AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers across the country. So we'll start our tour hearing from Jess Gomez, a Jumpstart AmeriCorps member and student at California State University, Dominguez Hills in Carson, California. Jess, are you there?

MS. GOMEZ: Yes. Hello, everyone.

MR. WARREN: Hi. Very happy to have you with us. So can you tell us a little bit about what you do as a Jumpstart AmeriCorps member? And how does how Jumpstart help students?

MS. GOMEZ: Yes, of course. Before I start saying how our program works, I would like to say that I'm truly honored to be here. So thank you for having me. Our Jumpstart program works towards the day every child enters kindergarten ready. As a Corps member, I support children's language and literacy along with their cognitive and social emotional development. I go out in the community and serve the preschoolers of Compton, California.

With our creative minds, we implement session plans two times a week with incredible topics to learn. That includes amazing books to read and fun activities to play and learn. We were with our children for one whole academic year, which I think is phenomenal.

MR. WARREN: That's amazing, Jess. So can you tell us about a moment when you knew you had made a difference for a student?

MS. GOMEZ: Yes, of course. I actually have a very interesting story to share. A moment when I felt I changed a student's life happened my first year serving in Jumpstart. I had a partner child from Head Start who knew all the titles of the books we had read throughout the year and even the vocabulary words as well. He was able to use them in sentences and even

demonstrate some vocabulary words such as rush. This made me very happy. From that point, I knew that this child was ready for kindergarten. I felt very accomplished and satisfied because the pandemic year was already difficult, as many of you guys know. But the students still managed to learn with our program. Jumpstart really works on resilience during these hard times.

MR. WARREN: That's fantastic. And imagine maybe you're going to come across that student again sometime in the future. You're going to be able to take pride in that in that moment where you made a difference in their life. So thank you again and keep up the great work.

MS. GOMEZ: Thank you.

MR. WARREN: So now we're going to head a little closer to my home state of New Mexico, to Tucson, Arizona, and hear from Judith Hicks, an AmeriCorps foster grandparent serving through the Northern Arizona University Foster Grandparent program. Judith, thank you very much for joining us. I love the background. Can you share a little bit about your service as a Foster Grandparent?

MS. HICKS: I teach -- I mentor, excuse me -- I mentor at Wheeler Elementary and my kinders -- I do the kinders -- and my kinders, I have four classes and I work with them to get their name, their ABCs, their numbers, their shapes, their colors. And throughout the year, we progress to sight words and reading simple little books. I have one experience with one child, and I'll be brief on this. His name was Hayden. And for some reason, he had a hard time with the Y. So I developed . . . I came up with this idea with him that we were going to spell his name and we have parameters. We have the blue line, solid, the dash line and the red line. Those are the parameters that we use for uppercase and lowercase.

So we started out with his H-A and I asked him to put his finger down and finish out the rest of his name. And I -- he looked at me kind of, "What are we doing here?" What I did was ask him to say what he had written, and it was Ha-den. Then I said, "Is that your name?" He goes, "No, you know my name." And I said, "Okay, here's what we're going to do. We're going to put a V in that space." And I have a template that has the numbers in their letters, etc. And he pointed to a V as if to ask me "Is this right?" And I said, "If you think that's it, put it down." He wrote a V within the parameters and I said, "Now put a tail on it." And he did. And I said, "Now, what is that letter?" He says, "That's my Y!" I said, "Now is what you did your name?" He goes "Of course it is! It's Hayden!" "Yay! All right. Now, you know that the Y is the most important letter in your name. Because without that, it's Ha-den." And he goes, "That's not my name." I go, "I know, I know. But now you know how to write a Y."

And he looked at me. He goes, "Well, that was easy." I said, "Well, then why didn't you get it the first time? You've seen it written. Why couldn't

you write it?" "Because it was hard and you made it easy by telling me to put a tail on a V." I mean, the kid was incredible. I just love that little bugger. But I teach him how to go with the simplest way to get the light bulb to shine. And when he saw all he had to do was put a tail on the V, the light bulb came on and he never, ever missed again. Never. And I was so proud of him. I tell you, I was just so, so proud of that little guy.

MR. WARREN: Judith. That is just amazing. All of us could tell how committed you are, how creative you are, and how caring you are. And that is exactly what our young kids need, especially at this time. So we all want to thank you for your service. You're just a great example for all of us.

MS. HICKS: Oh, you're very welcome. You're very, very welcome. I am six years into the program now, and I can't imagine not doing the Foster Grandparent program.

MR. WARREN: Thank you for joining us.

MS. HICKS: Thank you.

MR. WARREN: Well, now we're going to move over to Upland, California, and hear from Valerie Tu, a FoodCorps AmeriCorps member. Valerie, are you there? Oh, great. Good to see you. So can you tell us a little bit of what -- about what FoodCorps does and how it supports students?

MS. TU: Yes, absolutely. Hi, everyone. Good afternoon. My name is Valerie. The core of what we do at FoodCorps is teach lessons about gardening, plant science and nutrition. We kind of filter in some fun taste tests and collective class cooking. And when we're not prepping for lessons -- because we go from kinder to sixth grade, which is a lot of [instructional] differentiation -- we're out in the garden, we're out in the cafeteria, just kind of building connection with kids, asking them like, what they're eating, what choices are they making in our cafeterias, and just how their day is going. It's really awesome to build that connection. I think if you ask any FoodCorps service member, they'd be like, "Oh yeah, I'm famous. Everywhere I go, the kids are like [inaudible; covered by laughter]" and it's super fun what we do. But at the core -- and Megan, who's our other service member in the district, put this so profoundly, but also simply: And the idea is that our kids, they have nothing to prove to us. They automatically have our love, and that's what we do for them. We show up, we teach them a little bit about the world and the environment and maybe a little bit about themselves.

MR. WARREN: Well, I forgot to say thank you for joining us. We know that you're in great demand because of how famous you are. We would all appreciate your autograph whenever you get around to it. Actually, Judith

is a hard act to follow, but I'm wondering if you could share a moment when you knew you made a difference in a kid's life.

MS. TU: Yeah. Judith's story was amazing. For me, school gardens are the basis of an oasis for kids, especially after these past two years. We have a lot of behavioral remediation that needs to occur on our campus. And our colleagues, our aides, our counselors, they all bring the kids out to the garden because they know through that tangibility, it's just a really good, like, moment to heal.

I have this sixth grader and she's really just like, "I'm too cool for school. Like, I don't need to be here. Like, where's the darkest eyeliner I've ever seen?" And I took her out to the garden just to like...because they're in an afterschool program. And the way she lit up and reminded me that she's just a kid at heart and like, all she wants to do is like, have fun and do fun things. And she led the charge of, like, digging out like, bugs in the garden and pulling weeds. I was like, OK, I didn't even think you'd want to get your hands dirty. But good for her. And, you know, it's just very powerful to be in a space like a garden. Thank you.

MR. WARREN: Valerie, thank you for that. I'm a farmer and I've raised our three kids in our field so I know exactly about the healing power of food. So thank you very much.

MS. TU: Thank you.

MR. WARREN: So now we're going to head over to New York City and hear from Cece Nañez, an AmeriCorps member serving with City Year New York. Cece, are you there?

MS. NAÑEZ: Hi. And it's Nañez, actually. There's a tilde over the second N.

MR. WARREN: No tilde in my notes, but I should have known better.

MS. NAÑEZ: No, it's okay.

MR. WARREN: Cece Nañez...

MS. NAÑEZ: It's okay.

MR. WARREN: ...thank you so much for joining us. Well, can you tell us a little bit about City Year and how it supports students?

MS. NAÑEZ: Yes, I would love to. Also I want to thank you for letting me join today. I was really surprised when I got the invitation because I was like, "Are they sure? Me? They want me to speak?" But thank you so much for having me.

So, yeah, City Year. So City Year places student success coaches, which are us. In other words, a mentor. But we like to call them student success coaches all across the US in systemically underserved communities. So what that basically means is we're put in -- here in New York City, we get put in different boroughs. We have about 15 partnerships here. And we go into a classroom, we get a partner teacher -- we work with K-8 -- and we assist the partner teacher with behavior management. Mostly, like, we're there for the support of the student in more ways than a teacher is able to dedicate the time to do right - like, they have 60 kids a day. There's no way they can get to all 60 kids, but we have the time and flexibility to do so. We can pull them out and have those coaching conversations. We can have those one-on-one times in class to where we can get them to understand the problem. We can get them to understand the text, and we're basically just a helping hand.

And then we also do afterschool programs, which we then also write lesson plans for them to do. We do clubs, we do transitions. They have snacks with us. We do homework help, which is really a big focal point for us because as a lot of us know, especially now that the pandemic is declining a little bit -- I mean, we know Covid is still alive and real -- but parents are back to work. They cannot dedicate the time they would like to, to their students at home.

Some of them, there's a language barrier and they don't understand the topics. They don't understand the problems. So for us, that's where we come in. And it's a benefit that, we call it "near to peer," because we're closer in age to our students than teachers are, and their parents. And some of them, it's been so long since they've done math, they don't even know how to do it anymore. And that's understandable. So we really focus on the homework help aspect.

MR. WARREN: Thank you Cece. Can you tell us a story about when you feel like you had made a difference in a student's life?

MS. NAÑEZ: Absolutely. This is my second year serving with City Year and I was privileged enough to get placed back into my same school from last year, JHS 123 in the South Bronx in the South Bronx. And one particular student who I still have in my afterschool class, his name is Galdino, and he last year was very reactive, as most of our students were. Like, their social cues were not the same anymore. They were used to being talked to and talked at from a screen. They didn't know how to interact with children anymore. Like, it just was very new and different. And there is a language barrier with him sometimes, in terms of him understanding the way that people talk to him, and he immediately will react.

And I noticed that and I kind of was like, "Okay, well, like, -- what's going on?" Because there's something deeper than at the surface level as to why you're acting like this. And he had a lot of personal things going on at home, and his -- in school was really the only escape for him. And

so he was trying so hard to just like, fit in everything that he wanted to do.

And when I saw him excel was when we started doing art in after school. We partnered with Marquee Studios, and he is so talented. And it was just crazy. Like when I saw him draw, I was like, "Whoa, like, where did this come from?" And that was his outlet. And my old partner from Afterschool and I came together. We bought him a sketchbook, we bought him art pens, pencils because we wanted him to focus on where his passion was. And after we did that, we noticed a huge change in his emotions and in his demeanor and the way that he would approach people because he was getting out all of those emotions instead of projecting them onto everybody else. And so having him this year and seeing the growth that he's had is amazing.

He was actually, he - there was a seventh grader that was, like, bothering him. Rightfully so, he was annoyed. And instead of reacting, he came and he said, "Hey, Miss Cece, I need to talk to you." So I'm like, "Okay." So we go out in the hallway and I'm like, "What's going on?" And he's like, "I am really frustrated. This kid is annoying me. I've already told him to stop and he's not listening. You know, like, and I remember what you taught me last year, like, so that's why I came and talked to you." Because I stress self advocacy with my students so much, because we can't read your minds. I would love to know every single thing that's going on through their head, but I can't.

And so for him to have the maturity to come and talk to me and advocate for himself was huge, because that's growth, right. Like, progress is not linear, excuse me, linear for these students, but like, it's slow but steady. And for him to know that, like, he made the right choice, because I was like, "I'm so proud of you right now." I was like, "Do you understand what you just did?" And he was like, "What? I just told you what I was feeling." I said, "Exactly. You told me what you were feeling instead of reacting." I said, "Because last year that could have led to you getting into a fight. That's just the reality. It could have led to that point. And you grew - like, you're talking; you're vocalizing how you feel."

And it's just a beautiful thing to know that's our impact, even though they don't tell us every day that they love us; they don't tell us every day that they appreciate us when they grow, and they have situations like that. We [still] know the impact that we make.

MR. WARREN: Absolutely. It's just really amazing to hear that example of the power of those one-on-one interactions and the kind of support that students just really need at this time. So I just want to tell you, thank you so much for your service, Cece.

MS. NAÑEZ: Thank you, I appreciate it.

MR. WARREN: All right. Now, we're going to we're going to wind up our tour heading to Breakthrough Central Texas to talk with Maya Carter. Maya, are you there?

MS. CARTER: Yes, I am.

MR. WARREN: Welcome. We would love to hear from you a little bit about Breakthrough Central Texas and how it supports students.

MS. CARTER: Thank you again for the opportunity to speak. This is an amazing opportunity and I'm glad that you guys are going to be able to hear a little bit about how we work with our students. So at Breakthrough Central Texas, we serve students within the greater Central Texas area. So that's mostly Austin. So the students start in middle school and it goes all the way up to college and we help them through six years past high school. So whatever they choose to do after they graduate from high school, we will be with them for six years following that.

We just started a new program called our PSAP program, the Post-Secondary Advising Program, and that essentially helps students who are at a high school that. . .who probably didn't go through the traditional 12-year program. Essentially, we give them the option to opt in or opt out for 12 -- for also six years following high school graduation. And we can help them through college, if they choose to go to a technical school or if they want to go to a traditional for a year, then whatever that may look like. I specifically work on the college and career access program, and I help students basically who want to go to college or who want to find a career after high school. So -- and most of our students are first generation -- and we make sure to include our families as a part of that, because a big part of the students' lives is the families, and making sure we consider all avenues of that.

And essentially, we help them in all aspects of what it would be like to succeed in college. So if that is financial aid or if that's helping with applying to the schools itself or transferring to schools, withdrawing from schools, we provide direct service to students. So we can go to campuses and stuff. I specifically serve students within different parts of Texas, so I will travel to those colleges. One school that I can say that most people probably will know off the bat is Texas A&M in College Station. That's one of the bigger campuses that I serve directly, and that's a big part of what we do.

MR. WARREN: Fantastic. Can you tell us about a moment when you knew you had made a difference in a student's life?

MS. CARTER: Yes. So this is actually my third year at Breakthrough Central Texas. And I'd say one of the things that made a huge impact, just even more recently -- because it's a growing story, it's something that keeps building on -- This first year, I was working with a student who was

enrolled in Texas State University in San Marcos, and she was trying to become a dental hygienist, but she wasn't really sure, like, how to go about doing that. And she was really, like . . . she was taking the classes and everything; she signed up for everything, but she felt very overwhelmed; she felt super stressed -- like she thought she was doing everything wrong. We provide tutors, so I got her a tutor to help her with her classes and everything. She said it still didn't feel like it was helping a lot, so she decided to withdraw from school.

I kind of lost track of her after a while, unfortunately. When people think of Austin, they don't think of rural areas, but we have a lot of rural areas and a lot of our students are in those rural areas. It was hard to connect with her sometimes because her wife wasn't the best, so we decided to just meet at a Starbucks every now and then. So I remember I met with her at a Starbucks my second year serving, and we're just talking about what her plans were for the future and what she wanted to do. And she'd decided that she was still interested in doing something dental-related, so she decided to go to dental assisting school, so I helped to look for a program. She applied to some programs. She decided to do one -- she completed it and everything.

And then we met up not too long after she completed it and she was working. And then while she was working, she got a little bit more experience and she felt a little bit more comfortable with everything. And then fast forward a few months later after that, and she was like, "You know what, Maya? Actually, I think I can be a dental hygienist. What they do is easy! I can do that - I can totally do that!" and I was just like: "OK! Good for you!" It was a huge confidence boost -- she went from crying on Zoom that first year, being like "I'm not going to pass my classes!" to like, "I can do that!" And as we speak, she's actually in college right now and she's on track to become a dental hygienist.

MR. WARREN: That's right. That's awesome. What an inspirational story to end on. And Maya, I'm glad to hear that you're in Austin, because there's a conference happening there called the Grant Makers for Education Conference. And a good number of my colleagues are there, so I'm hoping you could just break away for a little bit and make sure they're actually going to the conference. All of the live music around there..

MR. SMITH: Not hanging out on Sixth Street!

[general laughter]

MS. CARTER: ACL [Austin City Limits music festival] just ended. So I mean -- they might, you know?

MR. WARREN: Okay we'll talk offline. I'll talk offline. No, thank you very much. Just we really, really appreciate your service.

MS. CARTER: Thank you for the opportunity. Again, this is amazing. Thank you.

MR. WARREN: Well, once again, this is an amazing part of our meeting. I think that we're going to keep this going. But I just want to -- on behalf of the whole Board, Michael, all of our team here at AmeriCorps -- I want to thank you, Jess, Judith, Cece, Valerie, Maya. Your service is inspirational. We're grateful for your work and we wish you continued success. Hearing your stories made me think of this quote: "Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." The extra support, the caring, the concern that each of you talked about, and that other AmeriCorps members and volunteers provide, can be that spark in the lives of our students and our young people so that they learn how to read, so that they stay on track to graduate. So they find their way into a career and they succeed. So thank you all again. Madame Chair, I'll hand it back to you.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you. Thank you, Alvin. And thanks to all of you for those stories. Again, as I said, as Alvin said, it's our favorite part of the meeting, hearing from you, hearing what you had to say. Because if there's any question of whether we're doing what we should be doing, hearing those stories really makes all the difference in the world.

But in the time remaining, we are . . . the Board is now open to hearing comments from members of the public on what's been discussed today. I'd like to remind you to keep your comments to two minutes so we can accommodate as many of those who wish to speak. The Board takes all of these comments seriously from our stakeholders seriously, and we follow up with the appropriate AmeriCorps staff members who have the most knowledge about an issue. So we may not comment on everything that you say, but feel free to share with us. It's really important.

And now I understand that LSI will . . . if you just raise your hand, LSI will identify you and we'll move through these comments. So, LSI, anyone that has their hand up?

LSI: Yes.

MR. GUPTA: Hello.

LSI: Saagar?

MR. GUPTA: Hi. Yeah. Happy to introduce myself. I hope everyone can hear me. Happy also to get the video going too, if that's doable. But hello, everyone. My name is Saagar Gupta. I am the coordinator of Service-Learning Programs at American University in Washington, DC. When I was 18 and going to college, I chose American University on a whim. I was selected for the Community-based Research Scholars Program in my first year of college, which was new -- it was new to the nation as a program --

and I met about 40 students who all had this passion for community service from high school, who were all selected into this program. And I got to see us bond over service learning as a concept.

It inspired me to get involved with something called the Eagle Endowment for Public and Community Service, which was an AU-run grant-distributing organization that gave money and mentorship to students who do community action projects. Eventually, I became the coordinator and I helped fund and mentor over 40 students to do impactful projects, which I'd love to share some examples of.

To keep it quick: There was one [example] where a student who was a member for a charity had gone into a foster home [to serve]. In the classic community-based pedagogy, we ask students, "What is one thing we could do that would make your day-to-day experience better?" And they [the foster home children] responded that "We wish we had more outdoor recreation time. We had a basketball court. It's a little rundown." So we funded it. The students recruited volunteers. Talked to the facilities [people], built it, and it's now insured for 15 years -- a whole generation of youth who are able to go through that. That's one of 40 other projects, all service-learning based, all community researched.

And it changed my trajectory. I went for an MPA in nonprofit management. Our Eagle Endowment ended up winning "top college philanthropy" in the US; I went on to get selected by Red Bull to go on to Social Action Spring Break, and it really changed how I approach service. I went into directing a nonprofit on the development side and then into executive recruiting and coaching.

And now I'm actually back at American University running service learning programs for AU, my alma mater. As a first-generation American, an immigrant with immigrant parents, I was so focused on jobs with financial security, that if it weren't for service-learning education, I would probably have never been inspired to join this field. So I thank you for the time. I urge you to please support funding for service-learning and follow the written comments for the Coalition for Service Learning and support that in the House Labor H bill. Thank you.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: All right. Thank you very much. Next LSI?

MS. JAKOPIN: Hello, my name is Noriana Jakopin. I am a student at the University of Maryland, and I'm here to urge you to support the reinstatement of service-learning programs in public schools and higher education institutions. Eight years ago, as a sophomore in high school, I was lucky enough to be part of a public school system which has a service-learning graduation requirement.

In looking to complete this requirement, I found the Hydrocephalus Association, a small nonprofit for a lesser-known neurological disease

[that was] in need of volunteers. Eight years later, I went from volunteer to intern to my current role as a part-time staff member in their research department. I immediately felt the passion of my coworkers for the mission to improve the lives of those with the condition and have always taken immense pride in my work there. At a nonprofit without great public visibility, it's an "all hands on deck environment," which let me clearly see the impact my work had on their mission -- even when I was just starting out and having to manually enter thousands of [items of] contact information. In addition to the joy I felt for making such an impact, I had access to invaluable mentorship, which has shaped me both as a person and as a professional. Without my mentor, I don't think I would be nearly as prepared to enter the world as a well-rounded, thoughtful adult.

Furthermore, as a budding research scientist with a fascination for neuroscience, I have had direct access to people who are doing what I aspire to do, which has kickstarted my career. Eight years later, I am now helping with strategic planning, collaborating with research scientists in the field, and on my way to publishing three papers in peer-reviewed scientific journals. Because my school had service learning, I was set up on a path to success. And it is my hope that all young people have that same opportunity. Please help me make that possible by supporting the reinvestment in our nation's service learning programs and the 2023 House Labor H bill. Thank you so much for your time and consideration.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you so much for that story -- it's important to hear these kinds of stories and for us to take on these challenges -- and giving that model. We talked earlier today about the model of career, this leading to a career, and you're a perfect example of that. So thank you for sharing that story. Do we have anyone else?

MS. ALI: Hello. My name is Zahra Ali. I am a student at Augsburg University in Minnesota, and I'm also a youth representative on the National Youth Leadership Council's Board. I'm here in support of the Coalition for Service Learning's comments on reinstating service learning programs and prioritizing grants towards public schools and higher education institutions in economically-disadvantaged communities.

I believe that service learning is a tool for building community, a necessary tool for building community and connecting young people to -- at school for various programs towards career professionals, local businesses and resources that they might not otherwise have access to or might not even know are there. In my experience, service learning helped me contact professionals in the Minneapolis suburbs who were cultivating education equity in schools and allowed me to bring their resources, skills and knowledge to my own school, which was having some issues around racial diversity. And during the distance learning time, service learning also helped connect my high school to libraries who really needed resources

around technology, media literacy, and help supporting students and parents who were doing distance learning at home.

As a future teacher, I see service learning as an invaluable resource in connecting with students and enriching their learning. I appreciate you taking the time to listen to our stories on service learning and its impact, and I implore you to supply young people with this path to lifelong learning.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Thank you so much for your comments.

I know we're getting close. How much time do we have? Okay, we can go. Do we have somebody else?

LSI: There are no others.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: Okay. All right, well, then, if there are no other comments: In closing, I'd like to thank the members of the Board, the AmeriCorps staff, and the members of the public for joining us today. This has been an important discussion to strengthen and advance the work of AmeriCorps and to help the Agency meet its mission to improve lives, strengthen communities and foster civic engagement through service and volunteering.

Michael, did you have anything you wanted to add? Or if not . . .?

MR. SMITH: No, Madame Chair, please.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: So is there a motion to adjourn?

MR. HARRIS: So moved.

MS. MCLAUGHLIN: All right. Without objection, the meeting is adjourned. Thank you all for joining us today.

(Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the PROCEEDINGS were adjourned.)

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CERTIFICATE OF NOTARY PUBLIC

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

I, Thomas Watson, notary public in and for the District of Columbia, do hereby certify that the forgoing PROCEEDING was duly recorded and thereafter reduced to print under my direction; that the witnesses were sworn to tell the truth under penalty of perjury; that said transcript is a true record of the testimony given by witnesses; that I am neither counsel for, related to, nor employed by any of the parties to the action in which this proceeding was called; and, furthermore, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, nor financially or otherwise interested in the outcome of this action.

(Signature and Seal on File)

Attorney, District of Columbia BAR #41135

My Commission Expires: May 31, 2024